

Wild Sheep: Argali

Wild Sheep

Sheep are supposed to have come originally from the lofty plateaus and mountains of Central Asia. The largest wild sheep, the *argali*, lives in the Altai Mountains of Siberia and Mongolia. The male argali stands 4 feet (1.2 meters) high at the shoulders. His spiral horns are 20 inches (51 centimeters) around.

Wild Sheep: Marco Polo

The great Marco Polo sheep of Asia live on the plateaus of Pamir, the "roof of the world" 3 miles (5 kilometers) above sea level. This sheep was first described by Marco Polo. The Marco Polo sheep is a little smaller than the argali, but it is remarkable for the wide spread of its horns. The *blue sheep*, or *bianal*, which is closely related to the goat, lives in Tibet. About half a dozen other kinds of wild sheep live in Asia.

Wild sheep look much like wild goats. Some kinds of wild sheep are thought to be halfway between sheep and goats. Wild sheep are high-spirited, daring, and self-reliant. They brave the fiercest storms of winter and climb higher than any other animals but mountain goats. Wild sheep live in bands among the mountains and plateaus of the Northern Hemisphere.

All the domestic breeds of sheep are descended from two different kinds of wild sheep. These are the *urial* that lives in Southern Asia, and the *mouflon*, which is the only kind of wild sheep still living in Southern Europe. Both of these sheep probably resemble their original

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Blue or Bharal
of Tibet